

Reading

Multiple choice

Practice

Exercise 1.

Choose the best answer

Australian Agricultural Innovations:

1850 – 1900

During this period, there was a wide spread expansion of agriculture in Australia. The selection system was begun, whereby small sections of land were parceled out by lot. Particularly in New South Wales, this led to conflicts between small holders and the emerging squatter class, whose abuse of the system often allowed them to take vast tracts of fertile land.

There were also many positive advances in farming technology as the farmers adapted agricultural methods to the harsh Australian conditions. One of the most important was “dry farming”. This was the discovery that repeated ploughing of fallow, unproductive land could preserve nitrates and moisture, allowing the land to eventually be cultivated. This, along with the extension of the railways allowed the development of what are now great inland wheat lands.

The inland areas of Australia are less fertile than most other wheat producing countries and yields per acre are lower. This slowed their development, but also led to the development of several labour saving devices. In 1843 John Ridley, a South Australian farmer, invented “the stripper”, a basic harvesting machine. By the 1860s its use was widespread. H. V. McKay, then only nineteen, modified the machine so that it was a complete harvester: cutting, collecting and sorting. McKay developed this early innovation into a large harvester manufacturing industry centred near Melbourne and exporting worldwide. Robert Bowyer Smith invented the

“stump jump plough”, which let a farmer plough land which still had tree stumps on it. It did this by replacing the traditional plough shear with a set of wheels that could go over stumps, if necessary.

The developments in farm machinery were supported by scientific research. During the late 19th century, South Australian wheat yields were going down. An agricultural scientist at the colony’s agricultural college, John Custance, found that this was due to a lack of phosphates and advised the use of soluble superphosphate fertilizer. The implementation of this scheme revitalised the industry.

From early days it had been obvious that English and European sheep breeds had to be adapted to Australian conditions, but only near the end of the century was the same applied to crops. Prior to this, English and South African strains had been use, with varying degrees of success. William Farrer, from Cambridge University, was the first to develop new wheat varieties that were better able to withstand dry Australian conditions. By 1914, Australia was no longer thought of as a land suitable only for sheep, but as a wheat growing nation.

1. What is dry farming?

- Preserving nitrates and moisture.
- Ploughing the land again and again.
- Cultivating fallow land.

2. What did H.V.McKay do?

- Export the stripper.
- Improve the stripper.
- Cut, collect and sort wheat.

3. What did the 'stump jump plough' innovation allow farmers to do?

- Cut through tree stumps.
- Change the wheels for a traditional plough."
- Allow farmers to cultivate land that hadn't been fully cleared.

4. What did John Custance recommend?

- Improving wheat yields.
- Revitalising the industry.
- Fertilizing the soil.

5. Why was William Farrer's wheat better?

- It was drought resistant.
- It wasn't from England or South Africa.
- It was drier for Australian conditions.

Exercise 2. Choose the best answer

Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are amazing little birds. They are smallest of all birds and weigh less than even a penny. The Bee Hummingbird, at barely more than two inches long, is the smallest bird in the world!

Unlike most birds, hummingbirds have iridescent feathers. Iridescent feathers glitter and shine in the sun. Hummingbirds are often dazzling combinations of greens and reds or greens and blues. Others are violet, orange, golden, silver or other combinations only Mother Nature could dream up. All hummingbirds have long bills to insert into flowers. Some hummingbirds have special bills to fit in specific flowers.

Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards. Hummingbirds are also unique among bird species in that they drink nectar from flowers. You can attract hummingbirds to your yard with special feeders that are filled with sugar water. These feeders are usually bright red in color because hummingbirds are attracted to red.

1. Compared to other birds, hummingbirds are
 - A. heavier
 - B. larger
 - C. about the same size
 - D. lighter

2. Hummingbirds are the only birds that
 - A. will come to bird feeders
 - B. are green
 - C. can fly backwards
 - D. are small

3. To attract hummingbirds to your yard, put up feeders with
 - A. sugar water
 - B. nectar
 - C. seeds
 - D. berrie

4. What color are most hummingbird feeders?
 - A. golden
 - B. white
 - C. red
 - D. green

Key

Exercise 1.

1. Cultivating fallow land.
2. Improve the stripper.
3. Allow farmers to cultivate land that hadn't been fully cleared.
4. Fertilizing the soil.
5. It was drought resistant.

Exercise 2.

1. D
2. C
3. A
4. C